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Challenge

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CAPITALISM THRIVES ON MURDER AND TORTURE



PL'ers Chase Jesse Jackson From Anti-War Rally

CHICAGO, IL, March 19 — City College students, led by PLP, headed the anti-imperialist forces in today's anti-war rally, marching under the banner, "CCC Students Against Imperialist War." The day's high point was chasing millionaire sellout Jesse Jackson from the stage in Federal Plaza. We started chanting, "Jesse Jackson Means We Got To Fight Back!" A comrade's speech exposed Jackson's support for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, saying he had no business at an anti-war rally. Security tried to shut the comrade up but other workers defended him. People encouraged us to go on stage. When we did, Jackson scurried down like a rat and left the rally in his limo.

Earlier in the day, we joined one of the feeder marches, chanting, "Soldiers Turn Your Guns Around, Shoot The Profit System Down!" While march organizers argued with the cops about what street to take, we made speeches linking the war to inter-imperialist rivalry and calling on students, teachers, workers and soldiers to destroy this system with communist revolution. Many were drawn to our line and bought CHALLENGE. When we finally did march, many joined us and gave contact information.

After an hour of stall tactics by the cops and protest organizers, we led a breakaway march down another street with hundreds following. Immediately the cops and organizers took the other half down the original street we proposed. By this time other comrades and marchers joined our contingent. While the Trotskyist International Socialist Organization (ISO) was chanting, "Iraq for Iraqis," we chanted, "Asian, Latin, black, and white, Workers of the World, Unite!"

Throughout the march we called on workers to unite under the red flag of communism, to March on May Day (born in the streets of Chicago), and to destroy capitalism. Workers responded. We sold all 250 current CHALLENGES we

had and then sold some older issues.

Two days earlier, about 60 students and teachers from various Chicago City Colleges (CCC) attended a forum sponsored by S.P.E.C. (Students for Public Education Club). This group formed out of the Strike Solidarity Committee (SSC) during the 2004 CCC teacher strike.

Two days before the forum, an S.P.E.C. planning meeting turned into a huge struggle around whether we should take a stand against imperialist war.

A week earlier, a PLP member made a motion for a City College contingent at the March 19 anti-war rally. Everyone agreed and we distributed a flyer connecting the war to cut-backs in education. The administration told the group's leader that the war has nothing to do with education, and if we didn't stop distributing the flyer they'll cut our funding. So at our meeting, the "leadership" decided we shouldn't leaflet or oppose the war. Two ISO members said we shouldn't call the war "imperialist." This struggle exposed the limits of reformist politics and tactics.

Overall, this was an important victory because we took our revolutionary line into the mass movement and challenged the bosses and fake leftists for political leadership. We confronted nationalism, pacifism. We also opposed the idea of supporting without criticizing Baath-fascist politics of the insurgency. Amid a huge police presence, one of their speakers had even encouraged the crowd to support the cops!

We left with high spirits and new potential comrades who saw the differences between our line and the rest of the so-called "left." Young people took leadership, renewed their commitment, and expressed serious interest in the Party as an alternative to capitalism. The next day we had a club meeting with two new students. ☺

'It's Not Just A Few Rotten Apples'

The liberal media are filled with hand-wringing articles that condemn atrocities the U.S. military commits against prisoners of war in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Pundits like New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman decry the murder of 26 prisoners in U.S. custody since 2002. A Times' lead story (3/27) announces: "U.S. Is Examining Plan To Bolster Detainee Rights."

The pompous, self-righteous scribblers in the bosses' press would have us believe these atrocities are "aberrations," deviant behavior that can be fixed by throwing the book at a handful of criminal elements in the military. Just punish the bad apples, the theory goes, and the U.S. armed forces can set themselves straight to carry out their mission properly.

The real atrocity is imperialism itself. Murder and torture of prisoners and civilians are standard operating procedure and cannot be otherwise under capitalism. Wars like those the U.S. is waging in Iraq and Afghanistan are genocidal by their very nature. The mass slaughter of civilians, the high percentage of casualties among women and young children, the devastation of cities and rural areas, come as inevitable by-products of wars waged for conquest, profit and domination.

Of course, those who murder prisoners of war deserve the severest punishment. But this begs the question. The U.S. rulers' plan to conquer Iraq and its oil has already caused more than a million deaths. In the Democrat Clinton's eight-year presidency, economic sanctions alone killed hundreds of thousands, mostly small children, through starvation, drought and preventable or curable disease. As CHALLENGE reported last fall, The Lancet, a respected British medical journal, estimated that nearly 100,000 Iraqis had died since Bush, Jr. launched Desert Storm II in 2003. A study in 1991 shortly after Bush, Sr.'s Desert Storm I described conditions for civilians throughout Iraq as "apocalyptic," after the military action had killed tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

But Iraq is no exception. U.S. bombs and bullets are slaughtering thousands of Afghani civilians. The Clinton-NATO air war over the former Yugoslavia in 1999 poisoned water supplies, perhaps for decades, with an incalculable consequence of future mortality among civilians. When U.S. rulers went to war in Vietnam, they murdered millions, using a variety of obscene weapons and tactics, whose only reason for existence was to spread terror and mayhem among civilians. These included carpet-bombing, flesh-burning napalm, agent orange defoliation and "strategic hamlet" concentration camps.

In World War II — the so-called "good war" — the U.S. military copied the Nazis in routinely bombing and slaughtering thousands of civilians in places like Dresden and Tokyo. The U.S. is still the only power to have dropped atomic bombs. It did so over hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and now in Iraq routinely uses nuclear-type weaponry — containing depleted uranium — with deadly consequences not only for the immediate victims but also for future generations of unborn and never-to-be-born.

This type of genocide is not exclusive to U.S. rulers. As the
continued on page 2

Editorial

Schiavo Case Exposes Bosses' Extreme Hypocrisy

The current media/religious/political feeding frenzy surrounding the permanently and severely brain-damaged Terri Schiavo gives the word “hypocrisy” new meaning. Schiavo, the victim of medical malpractice 15 years ago, suffered irreversible brain damage with no possibility of recovery.

Her husband collected about \$1 million; about \$700,000 went for Terri's care. Her husband and parents have been fighting for years over whether or not to continue her hospice care, and as we go to press, it appears she's near death.

The Bush brothers, W. and Jeb, and Republican slime-ball Tom DeLay, who declared that “God has brought us... Terri Schiavo,” jumped at the opportunity to pander to their Christian fundamentalist base who have staged a vigil at the hospice center demanding that Schiavo's feeding tube be reconnected. According to the Miami Herald, Governor Jeb sent state police to seize Terri and remove her from the hospice, but the mission was canceled when a judge ordered all police to make sure she wasn't moved. Senate Majority leader Frist, an MD, went so far as to diagnose Terri from a four-year old videotape. To hear them tell it, she's talking and about to jump up and walk out of the center. Of course, they also believe in mysticism and reject science.

The list of contradictions and hypocrisy is almost too

overwhelming to mention. President Bush ran for reelection demanding a cap on medical malpractice suites, and as Governor of Texas, signed a law that would have terminated Terri's care long ago. DeLay voted for a \$15 billion cut in Medicaid that will remove feeding tubes from thou-

‘Most of these religious fascists kneeling at the hospice are also on their knees praying for the execution of young black men on death row, even those who are minors, or severely brain-damaged . . .’

sands of patients, and pulled the plug on his own father 16 years ago. Randall Terry, an anti-abortion fascist serving as spokesman for Terri's parents, has a close ally serving time for murdering a doctor who performed abortions.

Most of these religious fascists kneeling at the hospice are also on their knees praying for the execution of young black men on death row, even those who are minors, or

severely brain-damaged or retarded. And they have nothing to say about the “right to life” of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed over the past 15 years by two wars and ten years of U.S.-backed sanctions. They have nothing to say about the millions dying from AIDS and curable diseases throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. And it's doubtful if they'd be there if Terri were black.

The “liberal” Democrats are as bad or worse. They are Bush's accomplices in imperialist slaughter worldwide. They chose to hide under their desks when the Republicans staged a late-night Schiavo show to pass “Terri's law” for Bush to sign in his pajamas. Meanwhile, the opportunist Jesse Jackson joined the religious chorus demanding the feeding tube be reconnected.

Under communism, money won't be a factor in medical decisions. Life will truly be precious, and every life will be society's responsibility, not left to the “personal choice” of a husband or mother. And the bosses and their politicians, media vultures and fascist gangs will no longer exist. ☸

‘It's Not Just A Few Rotten Apples’

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world's main military power, stopping at nothing to defend and extend its economic and political domination, U.S. imperialism naturally commits the greatest number of atrocities at the present time. However, it has plenty of worthy predecessors, and until communist revolution ends imperialism altogether, it will have worthy successors.

Hitler and the Nazis are the most obvious and well known masters of past genocide. But they learned from other European bosses. Hitlerite racism took more than one page from the U.S.-born “eugenics” movement. British colonialism and imperialism established an admirable record of mass murder throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The bosses love to sing the praises of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as a great statesman and “savior” of Western civilization. Well, Churchill helped concoct the idea of mass terror bombing against civilians in the Middle East during the 1920's, when air warfare was in its infancy. France, the birthplace of “The Rights of Man,” systematically tortured and exterminated civilians throughout its colonial history in western and northern Africa. For years, apartheid regimes in South Africa carried out racist havoc while their U.S. pals

looked the other way. U.S. supplies Israel with billions of dollars worth of arms with which to slaughter masses of Palestinians, such as the murder by Sharon-led Lebanese fascists of thousands in refugee camps in the early 1980's. During the Cold War, dozens of fascist butchers throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America used U.S. weapons and “foreign aid” to back the U.S. rulers' anti-communist crusade.

The examples are so numerous because imperialism knows no exceptions. Imperialism = mass murder and atrocity. The biggest of all the big lies would have us believe that the killings of Iraqi and Afghani POWs and the shooting of women and babies represent “exceptional behavior.”

The truth is that in its imperialist form, the profit system is the bloodiest, cruelest, most genocidal type of social organization in history. Its “peace” is the peace of the grave, and its wars can never serve a purpose other than determining the international pecking order among the world's biggest gangsters and thugs. Turning these wars into their opposite — mass armed struggle for communism and a revolutionary new society — will take generations. But it remains the only goal worth fighting and, if need be, dying for. ☸

The Texas Oil Massacre: Profit Drive Kills 15 Workers

TEXAS CITY, TEXAS, March 26 — “It looked like a... war zone of bodies being loaded up,” said a fire department official (New York Times, 3/24) in describing the effects of the enormous blast that rocked BP Amoco's huge oil refinery here on March 23, killing 15 workers and injuring another 100. And the root cause for this attack on workers' lives was every bit the same as the one causing the deaths of tens of thousands dying in the Iraq war zone: the drive for oil profits.

The blast occurred during a “start-up” of the refinery, following a 3-week maintenance shut-down. “It is a more dangerous period because of the high level of activity,” said a chemical safety board official. “Equipment is being opened.... potentially exposing flammable materials to air.... Welding, cutting and grinding and use of power tools are all... sources of ignition.” (NYT, 3/26)

“The shutdown periods are kept as brief as possible, especially in the past few years *when the difference between the cost of crude oil and the value of gasoline and other products has been large, making profits strong.... The pressure to complete the work is intense.*” (NYT, 3/26; our *emphasis* — Ed.)

There's plenty of profits to be made from this plant, BP-Amoco's largest, which refines 460,000 barrels of crude per day. That's why the oil companies turn to non-union contractors to cut costs using workers who “aren't as well trained” and “did not have the job security to raise safety concerns” with the bosses, according to Allan Jamail, an official with Pipefitters Union Local 211.

All 15 workers who were killed were supplied by contractors.

“Accidents” are nothing new at this refinery. On March 31, 2004, a series of explosions rocked the plant. Last September two workers were killed by superheated steam. The previous month OSHA cited 14 serious safety violations and proposed a \$63,000 fine, but settled for \$13,000 when the company “promised to make changes.” Now the drive for oil profits, and therefore the intense drive to make these shut-downs as short as possible, have destroyed so many workers' lives.

At first, many thought the blast was “an al Qaeda terrorist act.” It was terrorism alright, but by the biggest murderers of them all: oil bosses and their drive for maximum profits. ☸

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

☸ PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

☸ Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

☸ Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

☸ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

☸ Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

☸ Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☸ Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!



CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
PO Box 808 BROOKLYN, NY 11202
www.plp.org email: cd188@juno.com
718 630 9440

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PLP YOUTH LEAD ANTI-IMPERIALIST CONTINGENT

NEW YORK CITY, March 19 — “The Working Class is under attack, Cops out of the ‘hood, troops outta Iraq.” This was one of the many chants PLP-led students and teachers bellowed through Harlem streets in the anti-imperialist section of the 2nd anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It was the first time most young PL’ers experienced an anti-war march in a working-class neighborhood.

While gathering at Marcus Garvey Park, we began making speeches and distributing CHALLENGE to the many workers, Iraqi war veterans, students, teachers and professionals there. Almost everyone stopped to read our literature and discuss our political world view. When we started marching our militant chant moved onlookers to chant with us. Our energy brought the feeling of May Day and inspired us even more when workers pumped their fists in solidarity.

Our section drew the most energetic vibes from those watching. Our chants urged people to join PLP and condemned all Republican and Democratic politicians as murderers — our class enemies.

As hundreds of people took CHALLENGES, they asked about our group, and gave positive feedback. Our collective spirit

had an impact on others, and drew them to us, rather than us having to go after them. We had a marked influence in the march. Our ability to function as a unit sparked others’ willingness to listen.

Recently, as we’ve rooted ourselves deeper into the working class, it’s produced a qualitative change — more people, weary of just talking, are taking to our action-orientated revolutionary ideas. They want more direct action against the oppressive instruments of the state. We must keep our eyes on the prize of a communist revolution, and win those we work with to make that prize their struggle also. ☸

BROOKLYN, NY, March 18 — On the eve of the 2nd anniversary of the Iraq war, high school and college PL’ers, and friends held a forum at Medgar Evers College here. Young people who led it reviewed some of their successful campaigns against the profit system’s increasing attacks on students and the working class.

After each presentation, we had a short discussion on the topic. This showed to people that while as communists we’ve been fighting this exploitative system for some time, we’re not particularly smarter nor have everything figured out; the input



of all is needed to arrive at a correct way forward for the international working class.

The students who attended were filled with militancy and liked our revolutionary ideas. The students at Medgar Evers are tired of the deplorable treatment they receive from the administration and are ready to take action. One woman told us she was here for the long-term struggle. Another high school student read a moving poem explaining why she became a communist.

Afterwards, we made signs with anti-

imperialist slogans to carry at the anti-war march the next day. Small groups met to discuss world events and what the working class’s outlook should be in responding to ruling-class attacks.

These conversations were very productive in building for May Day at our respective schools. Many agreed that taking a long-term outlook and organizing among industrial workers, soldiers and students could build a massive working class party to lead communist revolution, ridding us of the profit mongering bosses. ☸

Anti-Oil War Politics Spark MeCHA Convention

LOS ANGELES, March 24 — Last weekend MeCHA (a mostly Latino student group) had its national conference at Cal State Northridge. About 800 students registered, mostly from Western states. The theme was “Education, Not War.” Those bringing information about the nature of imperialism were greeted enthusiastically. The chapter representatives unanimously passed a resolution to oppose the imperialist war in Iraq and build a campus movement against the war and the cutbacks in education caused by the war, allying with workers and soldiers in the process. Many students helped to make this resolution a reality. About 80 students marched to a nearby recruiting center to protest the war and military recruitment.

Some PLP students participated and helped lead several of the workshops, highlighting the importance of building a base for anti-imperialism and revolution in national organizations. While many MeCHA leaders advocate voting for “progressive” politicians, many Mechistas are looking for an alternative. They’re open to PLP’s ideas and plans for action, including fighting ROTC, supporting workers’ struggles, celebrating May Day, the international workers’ day, and breaking through the limits of reform movements. About 100 at the conference came away with CHALLENGE and 240 got PLP’s leaflet inviting them to May Day.

One workshop discussed the anti-war movement and the role of students, workers and soldiers in fighting imperialism. Students want the war ended. They wanted a solution to endless war and were open to building an anti-imperialist movement, and reaching out to workers and soldiers. Another workshop discussed why the anti-war movement must be anti-imperialist. The presenter explained how capitalism inevitably leads to imperialism and war. A second presenter explained how we need to fight the universities’ role in war, targeting recruiters, military research and the cutbacks caused by the growing war budget.



We presented a vision of a communist future based on production for need, not profit. Many wanted to stay in contact with the Party and learn more about imperialism, PLP and May Day. Some students wanted to have similar presentations on their campuses.

The conference encouraged us to be more active in mass organizations and to push for more coordinated action against the war, the cutbacks and racist terror. What we’ve accomplished is based on participation over several years in the mass movement, developing friendships among students who are more open to discussing imperialism and its connection to capitalism. Some want to know how we can stop all wars for profit, not just the current one.

The struggle in MeCHA and on the campuses must continue and heat up. To students wanting a quick solution to end the war, we stressed that it will be a long-term struggle, but we also need to act against imperialism now. Our revolutionary communist message stands out to students who are questioning the limits of the current reform movements. We underestimated how open people are and how thirsty for leadership and answers in the fight to end racist, imperialist war. ☸

Students Demonstrate Against Two-Year War in Iraq

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, March 15 — More than 150 students, workers and faculty gathered outside the Administration building at a local university to protest the U.S.-led war in Iraq and its “war on terror.” The event was organized by an alliance of progressive student groups.

When classes let out at 12:30, protestors began a circular march with signs reading, “No More Imperialist War!” and “If War is the Answer, We Are Asking the Wrong Question.” One student with a bullhorn led everyone in popular anti-war chants.

Once a sizable crowd had gathered, they listened to speakers from an array of cultural, religious, political and humanitarian organizations, exhibiting true anti-imperialist solidarity within the campus community. The speakers addressed the illegal occupation of Iraq, Abu Ghraib atrocities, and the rise of fascist and racist policies at home, like increased attacks on immigrants and the murder of 13-year-old Devin Brown in South Los Angeles.

Students distributed a leaflet condemning the university administration’s “open endorsement of spokesmen of imperialist terror,” viewing this as a “deliberate effort to win students and workers to a pro-war, pro-torture mindset.” The leaflet referred to numerous apologists of U.S. imperialism who had been invited to speak at the university recently. More importantly, the leaflet stressed the need to build a student-soldier alliance, and to actively support all soldiers who resist and rebel against the injustices of U.S. wars. The success of this protest, as well as of other recent activities on campus, reflects a more general change in the political attitude and outlook of students and workers that bodes well for the growing fight against imperialism worldwide.

RED FRIEND

UAW Pro-boss Nationalism Continues to Destroy Union

DETROIT, MI, March 16 — UAW President Ron Gettlefinger was itching for a fight. It wasn't going to be with Chrysler — he just gave them precedent-shattering health care concessions. It wasn't going to be with GM or Ford who are cutting production, closing plants and slashing jobs. It wasn't going to be with the parts suppliers, where he has negotiated two- and three-tier wage systems that don't offer pensions or health care for retirees. And it wasn't going to be with the transplants, where the UAW still hasn't organized one "foreign"-owned plant.

Instead he decided to attack some Marine reservists, young workers and potential union members who drill at the armory a few blocks from Solidarity House, UAW headquarters. For more than a decade, the UAW had let reservists use the Solidarity House parking lot during drill weekends. But Gettlefinger decided he was going to ban any reservist who drove an import, or sported a Bush/Cheney bumper sticker, even on a Ford!

Now, if the UAW was doing this as an anti-war position, some of this could be defensible, but the UAW is pro-war and racist. So by the time the story hit the papers, TV and radio talk shows were bombarded with anti-union hate calls. Union-busting companies, hired to thwart UAW organizing campaigns, were spreading the story like

wildfire. Having succeeded in shooting himself and the union in the foot, Gettlefinger raised the white flag and backed off on the ban. But the Marines told him they had found other parking facilities.

Attacking imported or transplant cars is the type of racist, nationalist, pro-boss ideology that has just about destroyed the UAW. Back in the 1980's, when Japanese auto bosses were gaining a significant grip on the U.S. market, the union banned foreign cars from their parking lots and sponsored flag-waving rallies where workers took sledge-hammers to imports. Two racist Chrysler employees beat Vincent Chin, a young Chinese student, to death in a Detroit bar because they thought he was Japanese. All this drove workers further into the arms of the bosses, disarming them in the face of huge racist cut-backs and job losses. Loyalty to the bosses set the workers up to go down with the ship, rather than mutiny.

Communists have another idea. We fight racism and struggle to smash all borders and win soldiers to really fight the warmakers. We are loyal to no boss. Workers of the world, Unite! That's our banner. And we're organizing industrial workers and soldiers to build a mass PLP to lead the working class to communist revolution.

(Next issue: *what is bad for GM is what is bad with U.S. capitalism*). ☸

230,000 Students Go On Strike in Quebec



Quebec, Canada— Students on strike in opposition to \$103 million cuts in university programs by the liberal government

Steel Union Hacks Suck Up to Companies Killing Workers

GARY, IN, March 16 — Recently in Northwest Indiana, a worker was killed at BP Amoco when a defective guard rail broke. OSHA fined the company \$1,500! A contractor was killed at a local steel mill. OSHA cited the company for unsafe practices and fine it \$10,500, later reduced to \$4,380! Twelve steelworkers have been killed here in several years. The average fine was \$3,791. From 1991 to 2003 the average fine for "serious violations" of OSHA rules has been \$862.74.

Last September, electrician Herbert Tolman was killed at US Steel's Gary Works while working on an overhead crane. He and three other crew members were changing a wheel, work they were not trained to do.

OSHA cited the company for using unsafe material and improper training. US Steel was fined \$6,125 for his death, while the three workers who survived, plus two supervisors, were fired (one supervisor was at home in bed when Tolman was killed.) The only difference between US Steel and the Nazis' use of collective punishment is that the Nazis would have just shot the other workers.

We can expect more attacks and deaths. All the mills are working short-handed, forcing people onto jobs for which they've not been properly trained. The bosses call it "teamwork" and "problem-solving." We call it speed-up and profiteering.

This is all part of the consolidation and restructuring of the steel industry. In Northwest Indiana there used to be almost a dozen companies; now there are only two: Mittal Steel and US Steel. Lakshmi Mittal owns what used to be Inland, Bethlehem, LTV and Acme and is now the world's third richest man. Workers at what used to be LTV, now ISG, soon to be Mittal, are experiencing the same sort of speed-up and job-jumping that caused Herbert Tolman's death. Practically every depart-

ment is working short. At the pickle line, workers on 12-hour shifts eat lunch at their station. There's no one to cover breaks.

Steel union president Leo Gerard and the rest of his leadership support the industry's consolidation and restructuring. They even invited ISG head Rodney Mott to speak at the union convention last year, the same Mott who has made millions off the backs of thousands of LTV retirees and laid-off workers.

Franco, head of Local 1066, hasn't organized any action against the murder of Herbert Tolman or the firing of his co-workers by US Steel. No demonstrations or pickets, let alone a strike. When OSHA fined US Steel \$6,125 for killing Tolman, Franco said, "OSHA tries to do the right thing."

Behind these attacks and industry restructuring is a permanent war economy and the ability for U.S. bosses to compete with China's bosses. They know the only way they can survive global competition is to drive down costs by bringing us in line with reduced man-hours and increased productivity. The bosses see the threat of war on the horizon, and the union bosses are their willing accomplices. Fighting to sharpen the class struggle and win more CHALLENGE-reading steel workers to participate in May Day will be our response. ☸



Philly Hospital Contract Fight: ‘No Cuts Due to Iraq Oil War’

PHILADELPHIA, March 25 — In July, union contracts expire for thousands of Philadelphia hospital and nursing home workers in Local 1199C. Specific issues at each institution may differ but several things can unite the entire local. Hundreds have lost jobs. Part-time work is replacing full-time. Workloads have increased. Patient care is worse. The Benefit Fund covering healthcare is running out of money. The Pension Fund is facing more cuts. The Jefferson Hospital bosses want to double the amount union members already pay for healthcare.

All these attacks have sharpened because the capitalist profit system that causes them is in crisis and war. That's why workers need political contract demands that attack capitalism and war, not just the local bosses. Such demands will help build the communist movement that can destroy the bosses' system. And that's why CHALLENGE and PLP members in the union are linking the contract fight to that bosses' system.

One hospital's negotiating team approved a contract demand of "No Cuts Due To the Iraq Oil War." Compared to several years ago, many more workers agree the war is about oil and oil control. Many people blame it for draining money away from social programs like healthcare. The idea that this is a "war" contract is no longer seen as so radical.

However, the 1199C leaders omitted this demand from the list for the membership to review. When confronted with this "oversight," union leaders said, "Don't worry, we'll put it in." That still hasn't happened. The union leaders clearly won't risk anything that might point workers towards communism.

Responding to their crisis, the bosses

have stopped pretending that workers or any opposition have legal rights. The continuing development of open fascist dictatorship in the U.S. labels strikes "a threat to national security." With low wages and mass unemployment, the bosses believe finding strikebreakers will be easy.

Union members are forming rank-and-file groups to organize for a strike. We're especially trying to build more leadership among young workers, particularly women. There have already been some small group confrontations with the bosses over issues related to short-staffing.

PLP members are participating in these actions. Those who see strikes as a school to build communist revolution will show the greatest determination. We've discussed how each comrade's work in mass organizations could be tied to this city-wide contract struggle, and how the collective, not just the PL'ers who are hospital workers, should lead the Party's actions in this battle.

There's truly a lot at stake for 1199C members. The increased activity in these contract fights can be intense. The more active union delegates can't walk anywhere without being stopped by workers who want some discussion. It's easy for PL'ers to get lost in the reform issues. The workers' greatest gains would be more CHALLENGE readers and more PLP members to give greater communist leadership to the workers. That's our main goal in this fight. ☸

Baltimore Students Strike Against Racist School Under-funding

BALTIMORE, March 16 — “Asian, Latin, black and white, against under-funding we must unite!” and “Potato chip, potato chip, crunch crunch crunch, Nancy Grasmick, feel our punch!” were powerful chants of striking high school students and adult supporters at a strike rally near Maryland’s State Board of Education in downtown Baltimore today. The more than 200 participants expressed deep anger at State Superintendent of Schools Grasmick for under-funding public education in this predominately African American city. And they cheered a PLP speaker while eagerly grabbing all his CHALLENGES.

The school under-funding issue clearly illustrates the communist understanding that capitalist government, courts, jails and police — their state power — are organized violence to suppress the working class. Capitalism’s own court system has repeatedly ruled that: (1) Baltimore City public schools are providing inadequate education; (2) Maryland violates its own constitution which requires the state to provide every student with a “thorough and efficient” education; and (3) Maryland must provide \$2,000 to \$2,600 more per student to the City schools each year. That additional money would only achieve “adequacy,” certainly not equality with the wealthy Howard and Montgomery Counties, but state officials have still not fulfilled the court rulings.

Last summer, the court ordered the State and City to target additional dollars for immediate educational improvements, like filling

teacher-vacancies so students wouldn’t suffer near-total lack of learning from a succession of substitutes. The City totally ignored that court order, while the State first ignored and then appealed it. The real power behind the scenes, the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) — the area’s largest businesses — does what’s best for themselves, what’s best for capitalism. They’re perfectly willing to break their own rules. Immediately after the August court order, GBC President Fry said, “I don’t think it is best to have your school system run through a court . . .” (Baltimore Sun, 8/6/04).

Today, that arrogance was enforced by a large number of cops at the rally, prepared to violently prevent strikers from approaching the nearby offices of the Maryland Department of Education.

Students — members of Algebra Project — did a terrific job, leading today’s rally, doing much of the planning and organizing, chairing the event, and giving most of the speeches.

A PLP member’s speech was received enthusiastically. He explained that Baltimore’s educational genocide was caused by racism, maintenance of the city’s class structure and funneling billions of dollars to the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq.

Firstly, in the 1960’s, when Baltimore was mostly white, the City’s school system was fourth in money per student among Maryland’s 24 school districts. A decade later, when African American students became the



majority, Baltimore’s per-pupil funding plummeted to 21st, remaining low ever since!

Secondly, the schools’ real function is to re-create today’s class structure in the next generation. Since 65% of Baltimore area jobs are unskilled, companies benefit when the schools churn out large numbers of poorly-educated students to fill low-wage jobs. An over-abundance of unskilled workers creates intense competition for these unskilled jobs, driving wages lower and profits higher.

All this delights the GBC, which is why CEO Bonnie Copeland was promoted from her GBC position to head the Baltimore school system. Upon her appointment, GBC President Frye said: “Having worked with the Greater Baltimore Committee for many years, Bonnie brings the clarity and focus of a business perspective to one of the most important

management positions in the region.” Education assuredly is the ruling class’s business!

Finally, less than one-half of one percent of the billions spent on the war in Iraq would double Baltimore’s education budget. The deadly U.S. war for world domination, by oil companies in particular and U.S. imperialism in general, is simultaneously a war on education.

The PLP member, cheered throughout this speech, then held CHALLENGE aloft and encouraged everyone to read Progressive Labor Party’s communist newspaper. The call was heeded — he ran out of papers.

The struggle continues. Participants are learning a great deal. Dare to struggle, dare to win!✊

Educators Call for Local Job Actions Against Budget Cuts, War

MANHATTAN BEACH, CA, March 23 —

Delegates to the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) convention advocated job actions to fight cutbacks. They defied leaders who tried to limit union activities to media campaigns and electoral politics. Leaders lamely pushed the slogan “Stop Arnold” but teachers and classified staff embraced anti-war politics. They carried signs saying “Schools Not Bombs — US Out Of Iraq.”

CFT delegates reaffirmed opposition to the Iraq war and occupation. Some rallied at lunchtime outside the convention to mark the second anniversary of the war. They voted to support students trying to ban military recruiters from community colleges.

Delegates were angry (and some frightened) by Governor Schwarzenegger’s campaign to cut pension benefits and education funds and impose “merit” pay. He slanders public employees as “special interests” while raking in huge donations from financial, real estate and other large corporations.

The CFT leadership responded by joining other public employee unions to support Democratic politicians. State Treasurer Phil Angelides (running against Schwarzenegger) and Assemblyman Dario Frommer. (majority floor leader) received enthusiastic applause at the convention but delegates were less enthusiastic about a dues increase to pay for this.

CFT leaders pushed a “Don’t Sign the Petition” drive to oppose the Governor’s attempted ballot initiatives. They called for a weekday rally in Sacramento. Who can go to *that*?

These dead end policies to support the

Democrats, the other party of war and cutbacks, were countered from the floor. Several local-sponsored resolutions for a statewide work-stoppage to fight the cutbacks were killed in committee. But activists inserted a call for “local actions” into the Sacramento rally resolution. Then an amendment proposing “job actions” was offered from the convention floor. A heated struggle followed.

Many delegates rose to argue that job actions, including strikes and especially a general strike, are labor’s most effective weapons. Several recalled a speaker who asked us to think about “a twenty- or thirty-year strategy for workers to gain power.” One said that workers’ power lay not in a contract but in their international solidarity and the power to shut down production. Unfortunately, nobody spoke for the need for revolution to win power. The problem is not “neoliberalism” but capitalism itself.

Meanwhile, union officials whined that work stoppages are “illegal.” A few delegates complained that “if we have job actions now, what will we do later?” “More militant actions,” others responded.

“We didn’t think we’d win the vote,” one delegate commented later, “but we thought it would be good to start talking about militant action.” To the surprise of many, the amendment passed! Now it’s up to locals to plan these May 25th actions.

As fight-back develops against budget cuts and the war, opportunities will increase to deepen class consciousness and understanding of the imperialist war system and the need for the long-term fight to destroy it with communist revolution.✊

PL Students Link Anti-Sweatshop Fight to Imperialist War

AUSTIN, TEXAS, Feb. 11 — A group of PL

students were among 200 attending the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) national conference here. We distributed about 50 CHALLENGES and 100 PLP leaflets titled “Students, Workers and Soldiers Must Unite to Smash Imperialist War for Oil.” We exchanged contact information with nearly everyone we met.

Many students in USAS are very committed to fighting exploitation and oppression. Besides meeting people and distributing literature, our other main goal was to pass a resolution against university support for war.

Our proposal explained that universities are ideological factories for capitalism which justify racism and imperialism, that they concretely aid and abet U.S. imperialism’s mass slaughter in Iraq by supporting its war machine. Universities develop U.S. foreign policy, conduct critical military research, train military officers and recruit students to be soldiers.

Many students were against the war in Iraq. A few, like at Seattle Community College and City College New York, had recently driven military recruiters off their campuses. Our proposal called for multi-racial, worker-student campus campaigns opposing military recruiters, ROTC and military research, and to encourage soldiers to refuse to kill innocent Iraqis.

When someone said an anti-war proposal has nothing to do with stopping sweatshops, we linked the two: major imperialist powers move factories overseas in search of cheap labor (sweatshops) and make wars to capture resources and markets. Capitalism has led to imperialism — capitalist competition on a global scale — and always results in war.

The proposal also called for opposing professors, think-tanks and administrators who push pro-“war-on-terror” or pro-war-in-Iraq positions. Some students disagreed, claiming this violates their free speech. We said professors who advance pro-war policy and who do weapons research are carrying out violence against work-

ers and must be stopped.

We received more support for the anti-war proposal (which was narrowly defeated) than at last year’s conference. Some students spoke in favor, including the importance of students and soldiers uniting. We also supported the anti-racist proposal which had a class outlook on — and opposed university support for — racism. This one was accepted overwhelmingly.

Many people were interested in PLP’s views. Some liked our anti-war leaflet, sparking a good discussion about PLP’s ideas. During workshops and meetings, we explained that racism and sexism are class issues (hurt all workers while benefiting bosses), not race or gender ones. Some agreed and believed our politics were good. A few were very receptive to the view that only communist revolution can eliminate racism, sexism, war and capitalism. But we must improve our practice, launching more campus campaigns against military recruiters, sweatshops and the above evils. Such activities will steel us and sharpen us politically.

During the Vietnam era, militant student-led struggles against any military presence on campuses (attacking and even burning down ROTC buildings from Harvard to the Univ. of Puerto Rico) further emboldened U.S. soldiers to rebel against the war via sabotage and mutiny.

The U.S. ruling class wants all colleges to become recruiting grounds for soldiers and centers for war research. Today, U.S. students must play an important role in the movement against the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq. As students, we must not let our campuses become havens for the war-makers! Students, workers and soldiers who target the facilities, materials and institutions used to make war can help stop the war machine. A worker/student/soldier alliance must be built to fight exploitation, sexism, racism and imperialist war, moving on to defeat capitalism itself with communist revolution.✊



STUDENT STANDS UP TO NAZI COP

Around 5:00 P.M. on March 10th I was headed home from my school-required internship. I walked toward crowded Times Square, the center of NYC, the quintessential city of the capitalist U.S. That was where I, a 16-year-old Latina, almost got arrested for the lamest “crime” ever.

You’d think the world’s most powerful nation wouldn’t waste time on such trivia. But U.S bosses have perfected oppression so people who just want to live decently find themselves perpetually at dead-ends. So, these bosses, the biggest criminals of them all, put a zillion cops on the streets to keep people from resorting to some real change. NYPD cops are ordered to hide in subway stations and accuse people — especially black and Latin teenagers — of possible “crimes.”

Entering the station, I used my mother’s disability Metro card in the turnstile and put it back in my wallet with her picture hidden.

Then two cops approached me, one demanding I show him the Metro card. I did. He looked at my mother’s picture, then asked for identification. I produced it. He told me I wasn’t allowed to use my mother’s disability Metro card. I said, “Sir, she’s my mother; why can’t I use her card?”

I began questioning him: Why do the lights go off when people swipe their cards through the turnstiles? What are they looking out for? How important is it for cops to hang around subway stations just to make sure nobody’s using other people’s Metro cards? What happens to people who must go somewhere and can’t afford to pay because they can’t get jobs?

The cop gave me a serious look and said he would write up a summons and arrest me, saying I would be fined for using my mother’s Metro card. I was scared and angry even talking to a cop. All I’d done was borrow a piece of plastic to make it to my internship and back home without a problem.

I started shouting, “I’m being arrested because I’m poor!” When the cop said he was “just doing his job,” I screamed that’s what the Nazis had said.

I shouted more questions — why and where had he been hiding; what did he think about my mom and me having to share her Metro card simply because she couldn’t afford to give me four dollars for the day’s trip. I asked if he knew that people had to use parents’ or friends’ disability Metro cards for the same reason, why was fining them the next step in resolving this issue. I told him and the gathering crowd that if my mom couldn’t afford to give me four dollars, how could she afford to pay a fine.

I figured if I’d be arrested for some stupid nonsense, I might as well make it worthwhile. I placed my wrists in front of me and shouted about how racist, oppressive, unnecessary and unimportant his job was. I asked him whether he thought that he was helping members of society.

I told the people watching that the real criminals go free, while the bankers and the MTA raise the fares and make the working class pay for their imperialist wars and the interest on the debt the government is creating.

He asked the other cop what he thought



should be done. They both looked at me, then at the people watching and listening. The train was arriving; the cop told me to never do it again. I laughed and told him maybe he should follow his own advice. I was pretty sure he knew what was behind all this: the Metro card, transportation fare, people of color, workers, money, oppression, a fear system.

I boarded the train and the cops went back to watching the lights at the turnstiles and deciding whether the people matched what the lights determined. I took deep breaths and looked around. The people who had witnessed the scene seemed happy for me.

I realize that a different cop might have arrested me. But either way, I learned that fighting back makes you and the people around you stronger and less afraid.

COMMUNIST STUDENT

GI’s Question Iraq War

A lot of soldiers in Iraq talked about the elections there. They were really much like those in the U.S. Even though many Iraqis voted, the election won’t solve their problems. I said people wouldn’t get what they want or need through the elections. They’re just choosing from different evils.

Governments use religion to control the masses. That was true of Saddam Hussein’s government. So one element has been “defeated.” Ironically, the organization replacing Saddam is the U.S. military. Now it’s the Super Power that rules.

Some soldiers think at least the U.S. military is better than Saddam. But it was the U.S. who helped put Saddam in power in the first place to give the U.S. access to Iraq’s oil. Also, there have been many more deaths from U.S. sanctions, bombings and military invasion than even the murderous Saddam committed. All over Iraq, people are really poor. Most housing doesn’t have plumbing, with the few exceptions of spectacular artsy houses. Innocent Iraqi workers have been killed so U.S. rulers can control the oil and low-wage labor. The Iraqi people’s problems are caused by capitalism and imperialism. So imperialists can’t be the “good guys” or the solution.

Iraqi workers enter many U.S. bases to collect trash, take out sewage without gloves and do other very hard jobs. Some are paid about \$7 a day. Some younger workers just work for one meal a day. Even though many soldiers want a better life for the Iraqi people, that’s not the military’s mission, even though they say it is. These are things that we talk about — imperialism is the enemy of all workers.

Since the military constantly changes what soldiers will be doing, people move around a lot. Some friends have been in some pretty tough situations. Many realize how worthless this war is. Even people who originally volunteered for harder assignments feel far differently when actually in them.

People are thinking about these things. One guy complained a lot, but would also justify why we’re here. His problem for a long time was with the armed forces as an organization. But recently he changed. Now, not only does he dislike the military structure, he distrusts its whole reason for existing. Most important is to emphasize the big picture: why we’re here to begin with. More of us talk about this.

An issue that may seem small is big here — the slowness of the mail. For the brass, this means little. But for us it’s very important. As we press this issue, we know that small struggles can lead to bigger ones in the future.

RED GI

‘Million Dollar Baby’ Anti-Working Class

CHALLENGE NOTE: *The following two letters are the last we will print in these pages about Million Dollar Baby movie.*

I strongly disagree with the two letters (3/16) criticizing the review of “Million Dollar Baby.” The original review was on target exactly because it did not focus on the debate over euthanasia, but on the film’s anti-working class aspects. Neither of the two critics said a word about the anti-working class stereotypes that Maggie had to “escape from.” Her family is portrayed in vicious, terribly stereotyped ways. And wasn’t one of the villains a

black female prostitute?

But don’t take my word for it; listen to Clint Eastwood’s response to conservatives who were criticizing his film; he said something like, “All the bad people in the film were either black or welfare cheats. Why are the conservatives complaining?”

An aspect of fascism is the suppression of creativity in culture and various other individual “rights.” Many liberals and leftists focus on the reactionary culture rather than on the anti-working class nature of fascism. The cultural aspect is important, but fascism’s main danger isn’t from those who are “cultural conservatives and pro-capitalist/anti-working class in their politics and economics,” such as many in Bush’s base. The main danger is from those who are “culturally liberal and pro-capitalist/anti-working class in their politics and economics.” Politicians like Schwarzenegger and other cultural relativists appeal to those who oppose those aspects of fascism that threaten their own middle-class individual rights, while the anti-working class core of their ideas is primary.

One critical letter actually apologized for Eastwood’s performing in the “Dirty Harry” films, considered pro-fascist even by moderate liberals, saying he didn’t direct those films, he “only starred” in them.

Films can be reactionary and still have some positive aspects. We should become skilled in understanding and pointing out both aspects. But in discussing the positive, we should be clear about those film’s basic reactionary nature. Otherwise, we risk misleading people into failing to expose anti-working class culture. And if we don’t, who will?

MIDWEST FILM FAN

Movie ‘Probed Human Condition’

Rather than answer each criticism of my response to the review of “Million Dollar Baby,” I’d rather discuss why I liked it. The main characters are interesting, and flawed. Each has traits I admire (a certain strength, respect for others, loyalty to friends and real feelings for their fellow man). Obviously they’re also in a terrible business. I think boxing should be banned. They’re clearly loners caught inside a lonely world of boxing. And they have no class understanding of the world.

The interaction of the characters had depth and probed into the human condition. The turn of events and Eastwood’s ultimate decision also made the film deeply moving and emotional. I fail to see how euthanasia — which Eastwood eventually accepts to end the life of the woman boxer — makes the film fascist. Is it fascist to end one’s life because of a grave injury? It may be right or wrong, but each case should be taken individually. I don’t believe it was a “fascist” move to end her life. I know communists who have pulled the plug on their loved ones, are they fascists? I don’t think so!

We don’t have much communist culture to look at. Movies, certainly controlled and manipulated by capitalist ideas, are a form of entertainment that gives people a break from the rotten world we live in. Yes, it’s also a way to indoctrinate and get people to accept this world and be mired in the cynicism of most movies. So it’s vital to critique these movies and discuss them with our friends. But if every

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More Letters

continued from page 6

movie that has bad ideas — and almost all do — are fascist then we should just dismiss all of them and forget why we're attracted to aspects of the film.

I did like "Million Dollar Baby," and laughed almost continually at "Sideways." There is clearly something about these films that's attractive and entertaining. I don't think it should be dismissed and swept under the fascist rug. That's too easy. Despite what some of the letters implied, I don't think I was suckered into Eastwood's "fascist ideology" and view of the world.

Talking to friends about how our world view contrasts with Eastwood's cynical and individualist view is well worth the discussion. I just didn't agree with the reviewer's ideas on the film. I also felt — as I stated — that the reviewer's interpretation was just wrong in many places. If I hurt his/her feelings I didn't mean to. I was just stating how I felt. Strong criticism, from either position, makes for a more lively discussion. It's all good!

BIG RED

CHALLENGE Needs More Coverage of French General Strike

The clip that appeared in the last issue of CHALLENGE about the general strike in France in the very least should have been a full article. It really should have been the editorial. In this period of low class-consciousness and struggle, we as a working class need to know what's happening around the world involving any portion of the working class. The bosses' media didn't inform the U.S. working class about it, and we shouldn't expect them to. CHALLENGE, on the other hand, is the working-class paper and as such should have done a better job disseminating news and analysis of this important event.

BROOKLYN READER

Gutter-Fascists, Liberals, Homeland Security Gang Up On Immigrant Workers

On the same day that the liberal N.Y. Times published an editorial criticizing the Bush administration for not securing U.S. borders, allowing terrorists to easily enter the country, a deranged Native American youth in Minnesota went on a rampage killing his grandfather, the latter's companion, a teacher and six students at his school. While himself a victim of racism against Native Americans, ironically this youth was so twisted he praised Hitler. Many around the world saw this as U.S. ruling-class violence breeding domestic terrorists.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration is following the Times' advice, launching a multi-million dollar security initiative along a 260-mile stretch of the Arizona-Mexico border trying "to shut down the main artery for illegal immigration into the United States." (MSNBC.com)

The operation, run by the Customs and Border Protection unit of the Department of Homeland Security, will increase the number of agents in the region 40%. It's designed to thwart both "illegal immigration" as well as the potential for "terrorist infiltration" along the border area — the "Tucson sector."

The goal is to "establish and maintain operational control" of the border, according to planning documents for "Operation Full Court Press," the initiative's code name. It will redeploy Black Hawk helicopters and

significant numbers of air and ground forces.

The border's militarization is being joined by a mobilization of the Minutemen, an anti-immigration fascist group.

Thus, the liberals, the gutter fascists and the bosses' government are joining hands to militarize the U.S. even more. This is an attack not only against immigrants entering the U.S. to be super-exploited, but is also an attack against all workers. This militarization will be used increasingly against anyone opposing racism, cutbacks in social programs, the war in Iraq, etc. We in PLP pledge to build international and multi-racial unity to fight these attacks. Join us on May Day to march against a racist police state and imperialist war and for communism. ☸



RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS
Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Dems won't curb US imperialism

Kerry considers himself to be a national-security-oriented Democrat....

Most national-security Democrats...agree that the Party should be more open to the idea of military action, and even pre-emption, and although they did not agree about the timing of the Iraq war and the manner in which Bush Launched it, they believe that the stated rationale — Saddam's brutality and his flouting of United Nations resolutions — was ideologically and morally sound....

Lieberman...is unapologetic about his defense of Bush's Iraq policy, saying, "Bottom line, I think Bush has it right...." Few of the most frequently mentioned contenders for the Party's Presidential nomination in 2008 — including Clinton, Bayh, Edwards, and Biden — belong to the Democratic Party's left. Instead, the most likely would-be nominees are at pains to appear hawkish on defense. Hilary Clinton has been particularly skillful... (The New Yorker, 3/21)

Some GI's desperate to get out

One by one, a trickle of soldiers and marines — some just back from duty in Iraq, others facing a trip there soon — are seeking ways out.

Soldiers, their advocates and lawyers who specialize in military law say that they watched a few service members try ever more unlikely and desperate routes: taking drugs in the hope that they will be kept home after positive urine tests, for example; or seeking psychological or medical reasons to be declared nondeployable, including last-minute pregnancies. Specialist Marquise J. Roberts is accused of asking a relative in Philadelphia to shoot him in the leg so he would not have to return to war. (NYT, 3/18)

Recruiters can't sell war, go AWOL too

The Army is seeking 101,200 new active-duty Army and Reserve soldiers this year alone to replenish the ranks.... That

means each of the Army's 7,500 recruiters faces the grind of an unyielding human math, a quota of two new recruits a month, at a time of extended war without a draft....

At least 37 members of the Army Recruiting Command, which oversees enlistment, have gone AWOL since October 2002....

"The recruiter is struck in the situation where you're not going to make mission, It just won't happen," the New York recruiter said. "And you're getting chewed out for every day for it. It's horrible." He said the assignment was more strenuous than the time he was shot at while deployed in Africa....

One recruiter in the New York area said that when he steps outside his office for a cigarette, he often is barraged with epithets from passers-by angry about the war.

In January, the brother-in-law of a prospective recruit lashed into him. "He swore at me," the recruiter said, "and said the he would rather have his brother-in-law in jail for selling crack than in the Army." (NYT, 3/27)

Blame higher-ups for torture

...The American Civil Liberties Union....charges that Mr. Rumsfeld personally authorized unlawful interrogation techniques....It contends that the abuse of detainees was widespread and that Mr. Rumsfeld and other top administration officials were well aware of it....

According to the suit, it is unreasonable to believe that Mr. Rumsfeld could have remained in the dark about the rampant mistreatment...It cites a wealth of evidence readily available to the secretary, including...internal government reports, and concerns expressed by such reputable groups as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

(The committee has noted, among other things, that mili-



tary intelligence estimates suggest that 70 percent to 90 percent of the people detained in Iraq had been seized by mistake.) (NYT, 3/28)

Capitalism undermines Russia

The Russian academy of sciences has estimated that since 1995 the poorest fifth of Muscovites have seen their incomes drop by nearly two-thirds. The next richest 50% have seen their income fall by a third. Only the top 20% have got richer — by 50%. The cash has mostly gone abroad, draining the reserve of capital necessary for investment in business. (GW, 3/24)

Locked-in janitors accuse bosses

Three immigrant janitors will file a lawsuit today against two supermarkets in the Bronx, accusing them of endangering their lives by locking them in at night, with the fire exits blocked or padlocked....

The lawyers plan to file the lawsuit...today, the 94th anniversary of the Triangle fire, in which 146 garment workers died when locked and blocked factory doors prevented them from escaping a fire. (NYT, 3/25)

Robots: Revolt Falls Prey to Idea of ‘Good Bosses’

“Robots,” a new computer-animated film, is both entertaining and full of politics. It’s supposed to be a kid’s movie, but the adults in the audience were laughing constantly. The jokes are clever, and will appeal to both adults and younger kids. As for the politics...they’re both good and bad. The “Robots” society is all robots and machines, and includes different classes. All the robots seem to be built and sold by one corporation. Due to falling profits, the company’s owner (Bigweld, an older guy played by Mel Brooks), hands over the company’s operation to a young, super-greedy boss, “Ratchet” (remember “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”?). He wears robot gear resembling a flashy business suit, is controlled by his twisted, evil mother, and — like all bosses — only cares about making the company more profitable.

In contrast, Bigweld’s goal had been “to make things better.” He had allowed the poorer, older model robots to buy the spare parts they needed to continue to exist. But Ratchet stops producing these spare parts, forcing the poorer robots to buy the flashy new parts they can’t afford. (This is an obvious jab at the computer, DVD and other industries whose products become obsolete after a few years, forcing us to “upgrade.” Some critics see this plot-strand as an attack on the plastic surgery and similar industries that con us into spending big bucks to “improve” our appearance).

Even worse, horrifying new machines are sent around the city rounding up the older-model robots for melting down in the oven, paralleling the Holocaust.

The film’s big political weakness portrays the original owner, Bigweld, as basically altruistic, while the new boss is an evil Hitlerite. This seems to mirror the “anyone-but-Bush” movement, looking to some mythical past when capitalism was “better.”

The movie does have major political strengths, too. It also

focuses on a poor family, with a dishwasher dad and a wide-eyed young son named Rodney Copperbottom who heads to the city to try making it as an inventor with the robot company. After being viciously ridiculed and then turned down, he discovers the new boss’s operation.

At first he helps the robots who are too poor to upgrade and buy new parts by repairing them with cheap spare parts. Soon he realizes the need to confront the company directly, and leads an armed struggle of the poor robots against the fascist corporate robots!

The movie ends with a hilarious musical number in which all the blue-collar robots celebrate their victory, joined by one corporate robot (played by Halle Berry) who has defected. Unfortunately, this revolt was fought only to reinstate the old, “less exploitative” version of corporate capitalism in which the poor are allowed to survive, rather than the new genocidal version in which they are rounded up for the ovens. This movie is worth seeing. It features almost constant puns, satire, cultural references, etc., geared toward the parents in the audience. The slapstick visual humor should appeal to both pre-teen kids and their parents. For example, one hilarious character is an older female robot who’s known for taking in those who can’t make it on their own. She’s described as somewhat “earthy cruncy” with an ass so big it knocks over the other robots around her.

Robin Williams plays one of the “Rusties,” the blue-collar family that helps lead the uprising. The politics are clear enough to be understood by kids (in fact, the 9-year-old I took described it as a movie about class conflicts even before we saw it) but it can be discussed by adults, too.



Rulers Direct ‘Global War on Terror’ Against U.S. Workers

The ruling class is widening the “global war on terror” to go after U.S. citizens. A leader in this process is new Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. As a federal judge, he said that the challenge for the ruling class was to be able to detain U.S. citizens without trial, just as they have done with immigrants. As our Party stresses, racism is the cutting edge of fascist attacks, which end up hurting the entire working class.

Going after U.S. citizens inside the U.S. is controversial because it goes against all the hype about a “Bill of Rights.” Plus, each group of bosses worries that once a crackdown starts; it could be used against their favorite storm troopers (like the violent anti-abortionists). Chertoff laid out a series of options (see the ABA’s National Security Law Report, October 2004):

- Declare “suspects” to be “illegal combatants” who can be held indefinitely without charges or lawyers;
- Haul civilian “suspects” before military commissions that are allowed to ignore normal court procedures;
- Change existing laws to allow more use of secret evidence and to make more activities illegal for “supporting” terrorism (for instance, outlawing “terrorist propaganda” which could then be used against any group or individual that opposes the war).

Last year’s intelligence “reform” said that terrorism suspects have no right to bail. The suspect is presumed guilty. This was used for the first time to hold Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, a U.S. citizen who the FBI had the Saudis arrest when he was in Saudi Arabia. They held and tortured him for two years. He was brought back to the U.S. and charged with plotting to kill Bush, even though the head of the Washington FBI office wrote that there was no case against him. Now he’s locked up, and his fam-

ily cannot visit him unless they agree to say nothing about how he’s being treated or what he tells them.

The FBI is being transformed from a “crime-fighting” to an anti-terror organization. It’s adding lots of agents and following people who have committed no crime — just as it persecuted communists in the 1950s and civil rights and anti-Vietnam-war activists in the 1960s. Rules restricting the FBI were radically re-interpreted by the Clinton administration after the Oklahoma City bombing, and then entirely re-written by Attorney General Ashcroft after 9-11. The liberal-led 9-11 Commission argued that even more “intelligence” should be collected. (For an idea, see the February 2005 ABA National Security Law Report)

Bush’s budget will hire 500 more “intelligence analysts.” Congress wants to make sure these “analysts” — spies to report on workers who oppose administration policy — are in every one of the more than 100 field offices. The ruling class is using anti-Muslim hysteria to establish this network, but the FBI will have lots of resources to look at other dissidents. The FBI started collecting intelligence on “domestic terrorists” after the murder of the husband and mother of federal Judge Lefkowitz in Chicago. Before the Republican and Democratic conventions, the Feds bragged about how much they know about anarchists and anti-globalization activists. Before Bush’s second inaugural, Washington police chief Ramsey refused to deny that his cops had infiltrated protest groups, and emphasized how closely the Feds were following various groups.

Meanwhile, the CIA is under attack and losing its powers. New director Porter Goss plans to fire hundreds of top officials. The new National Intelligence Director is taking over the job of briefing the President and preparing the “national intelligence estimates” (the annual definitive estimate of what all the spy

agencies think will happen in each problem area). The FBI is recruiting people inside the U.S. who have contacts abroad or immigrants who may return abroad. The military plans to further expand its own network of spies.

There are several reasons the Bush gang is gutting the CIA. It hates them for talking too much and producing stacks of books and op-ed articles attacking their plans. They even exposed a covert agent to punish her husband for publishing a critical book. But mainly, they need to develop new repressive techniques that break from the old Cold War model, which can apply to foreigners first, but then to U.S. workers too.

This is not some Bush right-wing plot. The Democrats often criticize Bush for “being soft” on homeland security. Chertoff himself has long-time liberal credentials (see CHALLENGE, 2/2/05).

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) is on the cutting edge of spying on protesters. One thousand cops work in the NYPD’s own intelligence agency, under a former high-ranking CIA officer David Cohen, laying the “stepping stones to more radical groups,” to quote an analyst cited in the New York Times. Another 100 work on the FBI-led “Joint Terrorism Task Force” (these units now exist in more than 100 cities). They have hired Ivy League graduates, fluent in Middle East

The image shows the cover of a CD titled "PLP CLASSIC SONGS". The cover features a black and white illustration of a group of people, likely the PLP Singers, holding flags and a sign that says "ON ONE CD!!". The title "PLP CLASSIC SONGS" is written in a large, stylized font at the top.

The 1970's PLP LP's "Power to the Workers" and "A World to Win" are now available on one CD. It includes songs by the PLP Singers — in English and Spanish — such as: "Unemployment Blues"; "Challenge, the Communist Paper"; "Bella Ciao"; "Señor Inversionista"; "Every Time I see a Cop, I think of Clifford Glover"; "The Song of the Deportees"; "The Internationale" and many more. Rekindle old memories and live new ones.

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languages, starting at \$50,000-75,000 a year. The NYPD has offices in Britain, France, Israel, Canada, and Singapore and liaison officers in dozens of cities throughout the U.S.

The crackdown on domestic dissent has been limited. But the ruling class is working to put in place all the things it needs to outlaw dissent: intelligence on protestors, laws which prevent challenges to indefinite detentions and the atmosphere to justify rounding up innocent civilians on suspicion. The enemy is at work. ☛